

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE
March 18 - 24, 2011

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1. NATO Assuming Command of Libyan No-Fly Zone (03-24-2011)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said the United States is transferring command and control of the international community's enforcement of the no-fly zone in Libya to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Speaking in Washington March 24, Clinton said all 28 NATO member countries had also agreed to "authorize military authorities to develop an operations plan for NATO to take on the broader civilian protection mission" that was authorized by United Nations Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973 in response to the Libyan government's attacks on its own people.

Clinton said that U.S. forces will continue to provide support for the operation, known as Odyssey Dawn, and she welcomed the decisions of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates to contribute aircraft.

The secretary also announced that the U.S. Agency for International Development has sent 18 doctors and nurses to provide medical support to the Libyan people in Benghazi.

At the Pentagon, Joint Staff Director Vice Admiral Bill Gortney said March 24 that the handover of command and control will be “a complicated process” because of the need to try to keep the same type of architecture and information technology support that has been in place under U.S. command.

But Gortney noted that the pace of Operation Odyssey Dawn has been “pretty phenomenal” when considering that only one week has passed since the U.N. Security Council authorized the operation and military forces began taking action on March 19.

Gortney said approximately 75 percent of combat air patrol missions in support of the no-fly zone are now being executed by non-U.S. military personnel, and U.S. coalition partners are contributing 26 of the 38 ships that have been deployed in support of the operation.

COALITION SEEKS TO AVOID CAUSING CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

Gortney said that when and where forces loyal to Colonel Muammar Qadhafi threaten the lives of their own people or violate the no-fly zone, “they will be attacked,” and the coalition will also stop any of the regime’s attempts to break the arms embargo that was imposed by the United Nations.

“Our message to the regime troops is simple: stop fighting, stop killing your own people, stop obeying the orders of Colonel Qadhafi. To the degree that you defy these demands, we will continue to hit you and make it more difficult for you to keep going,” he said.

Although regime forces have withdrawn from Benghazi, they are still attacking civilians in Misurata and Zintan, he said. The coalition’s rules of engagement permit them to attack Qadhafi’s forces inside populated areas, but Gortney said they are not doing so, out of concern that such an operation would cause civilian casualties.

“Unless we can find — a mechanism to achieve the effect without harming the very people that we’re trying to protect is the challenge there,” he said. “That’s a very, very hard task to do, and we’re trying to do it to the best of our ability.”

Despite claims to the contrary by Qadhafi’s regime, there are currently no reports that Operation Odyssey Dawn has caused any Libyan civilian casualties. Gortney said coalition forces are trying to put pressure on Qadhafi’s forces outside the cities.

“If you can work on their supply lines, their logistics capability, cut them off, they’re not going to be able to sustain their efforts inside the city,” he said.

[U.N.-Mandated No-Fly Zone over Libya Successfully Established](#) (03-23-2011)

2. U.N. Rights Council Approves Investigator on Iran (03-24-2011)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The U.N. Human Rights Council authorized a special investigator on Iran March 24 to examine reports of excessive use of the death penalty, executions by stoning and inhumane treatment of political opponents.

“The United States and other partners are gravely concerned about the situation in Iran, where respect for fundamental human rights has deteriorated dramatically in recent years,” U.S. Ambassador Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe said during council debate in Geneva.

“Today we have been able to see the council respond to a chronic, severe human rights violator, which is Iran, and we’re very pleased at this development,” Donahoe said later.

Donahoe told reporters after the council meeting that the decision represents a seminal moment for the Human Rights Council. “It is the first new mandate that is country-specific that has been created at the Human Rights Council since the creation of this body in 2006, so it’s a very important moment,” the ambassador said.

The council voted 22–7 with 14 abstentions for the resolution, proposed by Sweden, to appoint a special rapporteur on human rights in Iran.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in a report to the Human Rights Council on March 14, called on the Iranian regime “to fully guarantee freedom of expression and assembly and to open up greater space for human rights lawyers and activists.”

According to that report, “The human rights situation in Iran has been marked by an intensified crackdown on human rights defenders, women’s rights activists, journalists and government opponents. Concerns about torture, arbitrary detentions and unfair trials continue to be raised by U.N. human rights mechanisms.”

“There was a noticeable increase in application of the death penalty, including in cases of political prisoners, since the beginning of the year 2011,” Ban’s report said.

He also cited numerous cases of amputations, floggings and the continued sentencing of men and women to death by stoning for alleged adultery.

Donahoe said country-specific special rapporteurs are used only in extreme situations, and Iran is one of those.

“It’s an extremely valuable tool for the Human Rights Council. And it’s probably the single most important tool that was created along with the council,” she said.

Donahoe said Iran stands with cases like North Korea and Burma, both of which have been the subject of human rights resolutions at the General Assembly every year.

“Those two other cases also had had a special rapporteur at the council,” she said. “So the fact that Iran did not have a special rapporteur until today was a glaring omission on the part of the council that was rectified by the action today.”

Donahoe said the independent reporting from the special investigator will help the Human Rights Council responsibly address the serious human rights abuses described by Ban’s report.

“The most important thing to keep in mind is that the establishment of this special rapporteur will have a lot of value for a variety of reasons regardless of how the Iranian regime reacts,” she said. “It’s important that the international community speak strongly to condemn the human rights practices in Iran, and we have done that today.”

[Ambassador Rice's Statement on U.N. Special Investigator for Iran](#) (03-24-2011)
[Statement on Special Rapporteur on Iran Human Rights](#) (03-24-2011)
[Ambassador DiCarlo at U.N. on Iran, Resolution 1737](#) (03-22-2011)

3. Gates Reflects on U.S.-Russian Cooperative Relations (03-23-2011)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Reflecting on current relations between Russia and the United States, Defense Secretary Robert Gates says the two former Cold War foes have come a very long way, and in a real sense the relationship can be defined by a single word: cooperation.

“I think if you look at the areas where we are cooperating and the kind of dialogue that we’re having with the Russians, we have come quite a distance,” said Gates, who was in Russia for three days of consultations. It may well be his last official visit to Moscow and St. Petersburg, because he has announced plans to retire from government service this year.

“It’s a lot different than it was in 1966, let me tell you,” he told reporters at the start of his trip to Moscow March 20. Gates began his government career as an analyst with the Central Intelligence Agency 45 years ago, served on the U.S. National Security Council, and went on to become director of Central Intelligence and serve as the secretary of defense under two presidents: Republican George W. Bush and now Democrat Barack Obama.

Gates said there is a single fact “that continues to amaze me” about the U.S.-Russian relationship.

“Russia is an integral part of the northern distribution network for supporting our operations in Afghanistan,” he said. “At this point we have probably sent more than 30,000 containers across Russia. Russia’s willingness to work with us in this I think is really extraordinary.”

“And then you add it to the things we’re doing together on counterterrorism, counternarcotics, the fact that they have cooperated and supported the efforts on the [U.N.] Security Council resolutions with respect to both North Korea and Iran, I think are very important,” Gates said. “So I think there’s a broad area of cooperation here that is really important.”

Gates noted that there are also differences, such as over human rights issues in Russia and some questions of law, and some debate about a proposed missile-defense system for Europe.

But for Russia and the United States, two nations that once faced off with sizeable nuclear arsenals and massive armies that were separated only by a thin geographic line across Europe, the relationship is still developing, he said. It’s the kind of geopolitical relationship — like the one the United States enjoys with close allies like Britain or France or Germany — that eventually will be able to withstand almost anything and not be derailed by individual events, he said.

“I would say we’re probably not there yet, but it’s not nearly as it was 30 years ago in terms of a single event,” Gates said. “And partly I think it’s because, particularly over the last couple [or] three years, both sides have been sensitive to the value of the relationship and there’s been good communication.”

Even the brief August 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia over the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia did not derail a number of things that were going on in the bilateral relationship, he said.

At the Kuznetsov Naval Academy in St. Petersburg March 21, Gates told naval officers that he visited St. Petersburg in 1992 as director of the CIA to explore with the head of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, Yevgeny Primakov, opportunities for the American and Russian intelligence services to cooperate in addressing common security threats in the immediate post-Cold War period, such as terrorism, weapons proliferation, global organized crime and narcotics trafficking.

“Nearly 20 years later, that cooperation to address common security challenges is real, and increasingly involves our two militaries working together,” Gates told the students. He advised the students that military organizations of the 21st century must be adaptable enough to face the threats along an entire spectrum of conflict, not just the traditional military confrontations between nations. This new relationship is part of a broader effort by the two nations to strengthen relations and enhance mutual respect, he said.

Russian Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov told reporters at a March 22 joint press conference that Russia and the United States, at the behest of their presidents, have been carrying out stepped up contacts.

“The major emphasis was put on practical measures, which could be applied to armed forces reform,” Serdyukov said. “Both of our countries are engaged in this work; therefore, sharing experience in this sphere and discussing this sphere would be very useful, both for us and our U.S. counterparts.”

Serdyukov said he and Gates spent considerable time discussing a proposed plan by the United States to develop a missile-defense shield for Europe, specifically for NATO allies, though the United States has offered to include Russia in the system. Serdyukov said that after the 2010 Lisbon NATO Summit and the meeting of the NATO-Russia Council, they have worked to share views on a missile-defense system and have developed a common understanding that “cooperation is better than confrontation.”

“And discussions will be continued by our experts in the special work group,” Serdyukov told reporters.

“Although we still have differences that need to be resolved,” Gates said, “we continue to make progress, both within a bilateral framework and exploring opportunities to cooperate through the NATO-Russia Council.”

After his meetings in Moscow and St. Petersburg, Gates traveled to Cairo for consultations with Egyptian Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, who is chief of Egypt’s Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which assumed control of the country following President Hosni Mubarak’s resignation. Gates was expected to encourage the peaceful transition to a democratic, civilian-led government, according to Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell.

4. Remarks by Clinton, Moroccan Foreign Minister Fassi-Fihri (03-23-2011)

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Moroccan Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi Fihri

SECRETARY CLINTON: Good afternoon, everyone. I am delighted to welcome a friend and a colleague. Minister Fassi Fihri and I have had a chance to work and consult together over the last several years, and his visit here today represents another occasion to salute a very special bilateral relationship between Morocco and the United States. We have a long history of friendship and partnership on almost every level, from economics to educational exchanges, from trade to development, and security.

But before I begin with comments on this important relationship, I want to just briefly address a few other issues of global and regional importance. I visited the Embassy of Japan yesterday to pay my respects to the people of Japan, who have endured so much in recent weeks. This morning, I spoke with the Japanese foreign minister to express my condolences and my admiration for the remarkable resilience of the Japanese people. The United States has joined in the international outpouring of support for Japan at this time of need. And in the spirit of the enduring friendship, partnership, and alliance between Japan and the United States, we stand ready to help in every way that we possibly can.

Also this morning, I was shocked and deeply saddened to learn of the bombing in Jerusalem today that took at least one life and injured innocent civilians. Terrorism and the targeting of civilians are never justified. And Israel, like all nations, of course, has to respond when this occurs. The United States is committed to Israel's security and we strongly condemn this violence and extend our deepest sympathies to all those affected.

We also strongly condemn recent rocket attacks from Gaza against innocent Israeli civilians and hold fully responsible the militants perpetrating these attacks. And I join President Obama in extending our sincere condolences to the friends and families of the Palestinian civilians killed in Gaza yesterday and appreciate that Israel has expressed regret.

We stress the importance of calm and we urge all concerned to do everything in their power to prevent further violence and civilian casualties among both Israelis and Palestinians. Violence only erodes hope for a lasting and meaningful peace and the final realization of two states for two peoples.

In our meeting today, I thanked the foreign minister for Morocco's leadership at the summit in Paris last week and for Morocco's important role in the Arab League's decision to call for the protection of Libyan civilians. We also discussed the international community's ongoing efforts to enforce United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 in Libya.

It is still early, but we have made significant progress. This week, Qadhafi's troops were poised to enter Benghazi over the weekend, putting hundreds of thousands of civilians in that city of 700,000 at great risk. Today, those troops have been pushed back and those civilians are safer as a result. Coalition efforts have downgraded Qadhafi's air defense capabilities and set the conditions for an effective no-fly zone.

I know that the nightly news cannot cover a humanitarian crisis that thankfully did not happen, but it is important to remember that many, many Libyans are safer today because the international community took action.

Now, of course, challenges remain so long as Qadhafi continues to direct his forces to attack his own people. So the United States will continue to support this mission as we transfer command and control to NATO.

Moving beyond Libya, this is a crucial moment in time for Morocco, the Maghreb, and the Middle East. I saw this vividly when I visited Egypt and Tunisia last week. And it was very inspiring to meet with the young people and the activists from civil society who are expressing such a strong desire to have a democracy of their own, to have some say in the decisions affecting their lives.

Morocco is well-positioned to lead in this area because it is on the road to achieving democratic change. His Majesty King Mohammed VI's government has consistently allowed its citizens to express themselves openly and peacefully, and it has been frank and forthcoming about the challenges ahead.

The King has long demonstrated his commitment to reform. And earlier this month, in an important address that captured widespread attention, he promised comprehensive reforms that would guarantee free parliamentary elections, including the election of a prime minister, create an independent judiciary, and assure human rights for all of Morocco's stakeholders, including the Amazigh community.

These ideas build on the King's earlier reforms that included increased rights for women and children, and universal access to a free education. We recognize the critical importance of the aspirations that His Majesty has described and we urge a continuing and rapid implementation of his vision.

We also look forward with great optimism to further deepening our strong and strategic partnership in working with Morocco on so many issues. Let me close with an issue that I know is of great importance to Morocco and its neighbors, the Western Sahara. U.S. policy toward the Western Sahara has remained constant from administration to administration. We want to see a peaceful resolution. Starting with the Clinton Administration and continuing through the Bush Administration and up to the present in the Obama Administration, we have stated our belief that Morocco's autonomy plan is serious, realistic, and credible – a potential approach to satisfy the aspirations of the people in the Western Sahara to run their own affairs in peace and dignity. The United States strongly supports the role of Ambassador Christopher Ross and the United Nations in resolving this issue.

So again, Minister, I thank you very much for all of the work we are doing together and all of the important work that lies ahead.

FOREIGN MINISTER FASSI FIHRI: Thank you very much. Good afternoon. Thank you. Let me say first that I'm very pleased to be here in Washington once again and to have this excellent meeting, fruitful meeting, with my friend, Madam Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

At this occasion, once again we talk about the longstanding ties between Morocco and USA. But we decide, as the Madam Secretary just said now, to have a roadmap for future with some action-oriented vision and concrete result for the benefits of two people. We not only talk about the importance of the bilateral relations, but also in connection with the – what's happened in the Arab world. And naturally, Morocco welcomes all these legitimate aspiration for people to have – to live in freedom with democracy. There is no Arab exception for the universal principle of dignity and freedom.

Naturally, we encourage – and we have maybe to encourage more – in the current approach and complementary approach to see a success in the transition in Tunisia, in Egypt, and to have also to work together to avoid and to fight against some risk, because what it shows is that the Arab spring start. We are not totally sure that the summer – Arab summer would follow the spring – Arab springs, and maybe here or there we will go directly to a dark winter.

That's why the discussions I have today with my colleague are very fruitful for us. As Madam Secretary of State said, Morocco participated in the last summit in Paris, and Morocco said very clearly that the Resolution 1973 is binding to all countries, and each country have the right to participate for the implementation and full implementation of this resolution. Morocco, naturally because of the strong relation between people of Morocco and people of Libya, members both of the Maghreb Arab Union, will continue to humbly contribute for this implementation of this resolution, saying and repeating that it's not an occupation, that no one wants to see Libya divided in two or three parts. It's not a question of partition, but it's question to protect the civilians. And for that, there is the military aspect and there is, which is very important also, the humanitarian aspect. Morocco decided to send in an important medical team five weeks ago in the borders of between Tunisia and Libya, and we will continue to think in total coordination with our friend and to see how we can contribute more on this specific issue.

We talk about the Maghreb and it's important also to resolve the dispute about Sahara. And let me just remind you that Morocco put an initiative on the table, and thanks to this initiative a new cycle of negotiation start in 2007 and now we are – we progress and we hope that we can resolve this issue, because the Maghreb is a necessity for the five people of the region, but it's also a necessity for the security in a specific region where al-Qaida work. Al-Qaida is here and try to create problem for – not only for the Maghrebs country but for many, many citizens and countries.

This is some of the points we raise today. But I want to be, once again, very frank. Morocco is satisfied by this dialogue, fruitful dialogue, by the cooperation with USA. And we are very encouraged by what we heard this afternoon and before, the many statements as encouragement and the response to what His Majesty asked for and present to its people in this continual process of democratization of Morocco, and we will work hard. The process start, the dialogue with all political parties, NGOs, and trade unions start, and we hope and we are sure that in some couple of month Morocco will jump once again with – in this balancing approach: economic development, human development, and political progress.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Minister, thank you so much.

FOREIGN MINISTER FASSI FIHRI: Thank you.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you very much.

MODERATOR: Just a couple questions. The first to Elise Labott, CNN.

QUESTION: Thank you, Madam Secretary. I'm sure you'll beg our indulgence, because we have one question and a lot going on. I'd like you to clarify your comments, if you would, please, yesterday about Libya and members of Qadhafi's inner circle that are reaching out to you and the Arabs. Do you think that they're reaching out to save themselves, to defect, or do you think that president – Colonel Qadhafi is looking for a way out?

And then if you could talk about the Arab support, participation, and leadership that you asked for. I know that we've talked about humanitarian contributions, but you said that you were looking for a

robust Arab support for the military operation. Are you getting that? Right now, it's only Qatar that's participating.

Mr. Minister, why do you think the Arabs are not participating more on the military side? Are you uncomfortable with the mission?

And then lastly, on Yemen, President Salih has presented a plan to the opposition with a lot of significant points. However, the opposition is really – the only thing they're calling for is for him to step down immediately. We have a decisive day Friday. Are you concerned, given that what the minister said about al-Qaida in the region, if President Salih were to go, what that would mean for security in the region? Thank you.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, first, Elise, we've been hearing a lot of things from many different sources. But what is very clear is that Qadhafi has lost his legitimacy to govern and the confidence of his people. And that is the main reason why he should leave power, because he cannot continue to govern and to refuse to meet the legitimate aspirations of his own people.

Now, over the last several weeks, as you know very well, the international community has taken a number of steps through sanctions, through freezing of accounts, through other accountability measures to put pressure on Qadhafi and the people around him. And added to that is now the military action which is adding even greater pressure. So Qadhafi has a decision to make, and the people around him each have decisions to make. The quickest way for him to end this is to actually serve the Libyan people by leaving.

QUESTION: Do you think --- (inaudible)?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, we think that there is a lot of discussion going on about what the outcome of this strong international support for enforcing 1973 will actually lead to. Now, I want to be clear that that was not the purpose or the aim of the use of force. Our military action was taken in response to the obvious humanitarian crisis. And we have begun to see the easing in different parts of the country of that crisis. So the UN Security Council resolution's goal is to protect the Libyan people. And our military action is, therefore, focused on the goal of protecting civilians, enabling the no-fly zone, enforcing the arms embargo and all that goes with it. It will be up to Qadhafi and his insiders to determine what their next steps are, but we would certainly encourage that they would make the right decision and not only institute a real comprehensive ceasefire, but withdraw from the cities and the military actions and prepare for a transition that does not include Colonel Qadhafi.

Now, we are very satisfied by the Arab participation, and there will be more announcements in the days ahead. But this is a comprehensive effort, and I think that it's very clear that as the minister said, each nation is contributing what it is capable of doing, and providing support for one or more of the various missions called for under 1973.

And finally, with respect to Yemen, we're not going to make predictions about what will happen in Yemen other than to say that the people of Yemen have the same rights as people anywhere, and we support dialogue as a path to a peaceful solution to Yemen's current political situation that includes genuine participation by all sides. And we are certainly making our views known on a regular and consistent basis both publicly and privately.

MODERATOR: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Madam Secretary, have you discussed with your Moroccan counterparts the reforms – constitutional reforms that were announced by the King recently as well as decision of a month ago of a national human rights body? Thank you.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Yes, we discussed at some length. I expressed to the minister our appreciation for the King's actions. We think that the reforms that he is outlining hold great promise first and foremost for the Moroccan people themselves, but also as a model for others in the region. Because as the minister said, what His Majesty King Mohammed VI is doing is economic reform, social reform, political reform, and some countries are only going one direction. And there needs to be a comprehensive approach, which is exactly what has been proposed in Morocco.

Perhaps you'd like to add something, Minister.

FOREIGN MINISTER FASSI FIHRI: Just to confirm that we discussed about this matter – (laughter) – and that we have the same position. (Laughter.) I talk about two legs to walk. Now, maybe it's three legs. (Laughter.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: But the reason that I would just add that we're so encouraged is because the King has been making reforms over the last several years. And so we're already seeing the result of those reforms and these additional announcements that he has made will add to that. So we're seeing exactly what the King has said he will do being enacted.

QUESTION: How about the (inaudible)?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, the human rights council that has been announced, I think, is an excellent idea. We obviously want to see it come into effect, we want to see it in action, but it fits very well with the full range of reforms that have been announced, and we think it will serve a very important purpose. Thank you all.

FOREIGN MINISTER FASSI FIHRI: Thank you. Goodbye.

5. Clinton on Afghan President Karzai's Transition Announcement (03-22-2011)

The United States welcomes President Karzai's announcement today of the first four provinces and three districts to begin the process of transition from ISAF to Afghan-led security in the coming months. This step advances the vision for transition that ISAF members and the Afghan Government agreed to at the Lisbon Summit in November and that President Obama reaffirmed in his December policy review. We look forward to troop reductions starting in July and continuing based on conditions on the ground, with the transition to be completed by the end of 2014. As we have long said, the Afghans themselves must take responsibility for their own future – for providing security, for strengthening governance, and for reaching a political solution to the conflict.

The provinces and districts included in today's announcement include areas in every region of the country and together they are home to nearly a quarter of the population of Afghanistan. Together with our Allies and partners, the United States will realign our civilian and military resources in these provinces to support the Afghan Government's increasing responsibility for security and the delivery of other essential services to its citizens. As transition proceeds and Afghan leadership strengthens across the country, a process of political reconciliation to end the conflict will become increasingly viable.

Transition is an essential pillar of the U.S., NATO, and international community's long-term commitment to Afghanistan. As part of that commitment, NATO and the Afghan Government signed an Enduring Partnership Declaration at Lisbon. The United States is also currently negotiating a bilateral Strategic Partnership Declaration with Afghanistan. This new partnership will contribute to building up Afghanistan's capacity and institutions, as well as to improved economic and political relations between Afghanistan and its neighbors well beyond 2014.

The United States continues to support the Afghan people as they work to build a more stable and peaceful nation and we remain committed to the goal of a region that is free from al-Qaida and no longer a safe haven for international terrorism.

6. New Initiatives to Support Tunisia's Democratic Transition (03-22-2011)

Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative Launches New Initiatives to Support Tunisia's Democratic Transition

The State Department's Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) is pleased to announce its plan to support the Tunisian people as they build the stronger democratic foundations needed for long-term stability and broad-based economic growth. The initiatives outlined below reflect MEPI's determination and ability to respond rapidly to Tunisia's strategic needs during this historic time of transition.

MEPI's Tunisia Transition Support

MEPI intends to provide \$20 million to Tunisia Transition Support that will help consolidate Tunisia's gains in the post-Ben Ali era and assist Tunisians as they progress toward sustainable democratic development and economic prosperity. MEPI plans to partner with local and international organizations to support the transition effort. Specifically, the \$20 million in new proposed assistance will strengthen efforts to:

- Establish an independent, professional, and pluralistic media sector that provides information transparently and constructively;
- Form an independent civil society that can play a critical role supporting effective advocacy and civic education;
- Strengthen and develop political parties;
- Develop a sound framework for elections; and
- Encourage economic reforms.

To kick off the Tunisia Transition Support initiative, on March 18, MEPI launched a new Annual Program Statement (APS) competition for innovative proposals supporting Tunisia's democratic transition, which includes the drafting of a new constitution, the election of a new president and parliament (anticipated for later in 2011), economic and political reforms, and other steps toward democracy. To learn more about this competition, please visit www.mepi.state.gov.

MEPI IT Public-Private Partnership to Support Tunisian NGOs

Through a newly-developed IT Public-Private Partnership, MEPI and Microsoft have arranged for several local NGOs to receive the latest computer software and related training to improve the effectiveness of their projects, build organizational capacity, and assist with cementing the long-term sustainability of their work.

MEPI Support for Tunisian Civil Society

The MEPI Regional Office in Tunis provides direct grants to Tunisian NGOs. New partnerships to support the Tunisian transition will include:

- Club UNESCO-Bardo Tunisie to provide training on citizenship and local governance;
- E-Khedma to foster economic development and promote job creation through an online portal website that will connect skilled young entrepreneurs with potential clients and consumers.

To learn more about these new opportunities for Tunisia, please visit the MEPI website at www.mepi.state.gov.

7. Under Secretary Tauscher on U.S. Missile Defense Plans (03-21-2011)

U.S. Department of State, Remarks by Ellen Tauscher, Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security

Ninth Annual U.S. Missile Defense Agency Conference

General O'Reilly, thank you so much for inviting me to speak today. I have been working with Pat for several years now. He's a great patriot and his work has made a real difference for our country and for the Missile Defense Agency. Speaking for all of my colleagues in government, we appreciate his advice. I also want to thank all of you for your hard work, your patriotism, and for making our country safer and more secure.

I have spoken at this conference for several years now, first as the chairman of the House Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee and now in my current job at the Department of State. I guess it goes to show that no good deed goes unpunished. But this conference is important because it gives all of us who are involved in developing and implementing our missile defense plans a chance to reflect on what we have accomplished and to take a fresh look at the challenges we face going forward.

Nearly two years ago, the Obama Administration undertook a series of reviews to update and upgrade our defense plans. We conducted an alphabet soup of reviews: The Nuclear Posture Review, the Ballistic Missile Defense Review, the Space Policy Review, and the Quadrennial Defense Review. The State Department, for the first time, embarked on its own strategic review, the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, otherwise known as the QDDR.

One of the reasons I accepted this job is that I wanted to support the Obama Administration's efforts to get our defense policies right. In the Ballistic Missile Defense Review, we set forth a new approach to missile defense that I had been working on to authorize as a Member of Congress. Then, as now, I want our missile defenses to be both operationally effective and cost-effective.

President Obama added a third component that I also agree with: The systems must be able to adapt to new threats.

I know there has been a lot of partisan debate over our approach. But as a former politician, I know as well as anyone that policy details often get lost in the media coverage of political debates. It is much easier for the media to write about the politics of an issue rather than the details of a policy. That's what happened at the end of last year during the debate over the New START Treaty. Missile defense became a political football. Opponents of the Treaty raised all kinds of red herrings. They created all sorts of missile defense-limiting scenarios. And those scenarios were as imaginative as they were false.

As Secretary Clinton said in Munich last month, "We have made it absolutely clear / we will not accept any constraints on our missile defenses. The United States Government will do what is necessary to protect America, our forces, our allies and friends from attacks from countries outside of Europe." Not only has Secretary Clinton made that point, so has Secretary Gates, Admiral Mullen, General O'Reilly, General Cartwright, Vice President Biden and President Obama.

And I have said it before and I am going to say it again. We will continue to develop and deploy effective missile defenses and to develop a budget – even in these difficult times – to implement our missile defense strategy.

Now let me turn to Europe and Russia since our plans for a European missile defense architecture have gotten so much attention.

The United States has no more important security relationship than we do with our NATO allies in Europe. That relationship continues to grow. When I first started working on missile defense issues around 1997, our NATO and European allies were very skeptical, to say the least. But there has been a huge change in Europe's attitude, and particularly NATO's attitude, toward missile defense. I have been impressed in my discussions with my European and NATO counterparts by how much and how quickly they have embraced territorial missile defense as a mission.

There are a few more key components to our approach that we are applying to our missile defense architecture in Europe. We want to protect all of Europe, not just some of Europe. We want our European allies and friends to buy into the European Phased Adaptive Approach; it is not something that we want to impose on them – that's not what friends do. Finally, we have started discussing potential missile defense cooperation between the United States and Russia and NATO and Russia; we want Russia in the missile defense tent rather than outside that tent.

Last year in Lisbon, Allied leaders endorsed President Obama's European Phased Adaptive Approach. The defining feature of this plan is that it makes our NATO allies true partners. The plan gives our NATO allies a stake in our collective security. Europe is no longer just a place for us to stage a defense system. I know that Ivo Daalder, who is speaking after me, will go into much more detail. (He'll also tell you that as our ambassador to NATO that you can find him on Twitter; I can assure you that you will not find me!)

This year, we will be taking missile defense off the drawing board and putting it into action starting with the deployment of radar systems on land and Aegis ships in the Mediterranean. As you know, one of our Aegis-BMD ships, the USS Monterrey, arrived in the Mediterranean earlier this month to begin the first sustained deployment of a ballistic missile defense capable ship to support the EPAA.

By the end of this fiscal year, our regional missile defense capabilities will consist of 26 THAAD interceptors and 107 SM-3 interceptors. And Romania and Poland have agreed to host land-based SM-3 interceptor sites. Their support allows the United States to base our systems closer to the Iranian threat and provides a permanent missile defense capability in Europe. These plans create a synergy and reduce the costs and burdens of a European missile defense architecture.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, I want to talk about missile defense cooperation with Russia since some think we are holding “secret talks” and “cutting secret deals.” Nothing could be further from the truth. Secretary Gates is there as we speak. Resetting our relationship with Russia has provided momentum on numerous fronts, including getting a New START Treaty ratified, increasing cooperation on Afghanistan, and putting into place stiff sanctions against Iran to curb and hopefully thwart its nuclear ambitions.

The reset also provides a path to seek an agreement on missile defense cooperation, which would enhance our national security. Missile defense cooperation with Russia has the potential for enhancing the capability of the European Phased Adaptive Approach, which is why Allied leaders reaffirmed this idea in Lisbon. And President Medvedev, for his own reasons, has embraced the idea of missile defense cooperation as well.

If we can work this out, there is an opportunity for a missile defense partnership that continues to move our relationship to one based on Mutually Assured Stability and that enhances our collective security. Russia has assets it can bring to the table, like their early warning radars. There are assets that we can bring to the table as well. We are eager to begin a joint analysis, joint exercises, and sharing of early warning data that could form the basis for a cooperative missile defense system. We will work together to ensure that our missile defense systems are mutually reinforcing. But, in the end, NATO will defend NATO and Russia will defend Russia.

Moving missile defense from a negative to a positive factor in our relationship could facilitate cooperation in other areas as well, including talks on further reductions in strategic, non-strategic and non-deployed nuclear weapons. // But reaching any agreement will not be easy and it will take time.

Beyond Europe and Russia, there are challenges and tough questions ahead of us. There still is much more work to be done to implement new regional approaches outside of Europe. We need to think through what a phased adaptive approach would look like in the Middle East and Asia.

When the various political and military dynamics are factored in, they might look different than our approach in Europe. Our Allies in the Middle East and Asia have their own missile defense assets and each brings different advantages to the missile defense table. We need to figure out how we can leverage those advantages to provide the best protection for the United States, our deployed forces, and our Allies and partners.

We also have the chance to forge closer partnerships to develop more capable systems with countries like Japan, France, Israel, South Korea and Australia. We can work with our allies and partners to upgrade their warships to enable them to conduct missile defense operations. And we can work with them to deploy sensors around the world to provide the data necessary for our interceptors to take out ballistic missiles.

I want to conclude with a note of reassurance. I know the debate at home over missile defense can be contentious. My former colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, feel very passionately about this issue. And I do, too. But the lesson that you can take away is one that should reassure our allies and

send a message of resolve to those who threaten us: Missile defense is a national and bipartisan priority and nothing is going to change that. Our country and our Allies and partners depend on the Missile Defense Agency and that's why we're so appreciate of your hard work.

Thank you very much and I'll be glad to take a few questions.

8. [Obama Meets with Top Aides on Libya \(03-20-2011\)](#)

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama held a conference call with top national security advisers March 20 to discuss the international effort to enforce a no-fly zone over Libya to stop Libyan military forces from attacking civilians, the White House says.

Obama, who is currently traveling in Latin America, had a secure conference call with National Security Advisor Tom Donilon, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Defense Secretary Robert Gates, White House Chief of Staff William Daley, AFRICOM Commander General Carter Ham and Deputy National Security Advisor Denis McDonough, the [White House said](#).

Ham, who recently assumed command of the Stuttgart, Germany-based U.S. Africa Command, briefed the president.

“President Obama received a briefing from General Ham on U.S. military operations in Libya, as part of the international effort to enforce U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973,” the White House said. “The president also discussed the ongoing military and diplomatic consultations taking place on the situation in Libya.”

Clinton had just returned from a [one-day trip to Paris](#) on March 19, where she had met with European and Arab leaders on final steps to enforce the [U.N. resolution authorizing a no-fly zone](#). Obama is traveling to Brazil, Chile and El Salvador March 19–23.

The U.N. resolution was approved by the Security Council by a vote of 10-0 with five abstentions on March 17. It authorizes the use of all means necessary, including a no-fly zone, to halt the military forces of Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi from attacking the Libyan people. The resolution also demands an immediate cease-fire, among other measures.

Vice President Biden spoke [by telephone March 20](#) with Algerian Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia and Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as part of ongoing consultations on coalition actions in support of the U.N. security resolution, the White House said.

“The vice president discussed with both the Prime Minister and Emir their mutual support for the full implementation of the resolution and the need to protect the Libyan people,” the White House said.

Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, said March 20 on CNN's State of the Union news show that a no-fly zone over Libya is “effectively in place.” He said that the current strategy of the international coalition is to block logistical support to Qadhafi's forces, which range from Tripoli in the west to the outskirts of the eastern coastal city Benghazi.

Mullen said during another interview on NBC's Meet the Press that this was a limited military mission for the United States and there will be no U.S. military ground forces introduced into this operation. "This isn't about occupation in any shape or form," Mullen said on the program.

The goal is for Qadhafi to withdraw his forces back into their garrisons and stop attacking civilians who have been protesting against his 42-year reign, Mullen said. Since the no-fly zone was imposed March 19, the Libyan military has grounded its aircraft and helicopters, Mullen said.

U.S. and British Navy ships and submarines fired 112 highly precise Tomahawk cruise missiles at more than 20 air defense, communications and command facilities to clear an air corridor for international military aircraft to establish air patrols and ground Libya's air force, Vice Admiral William Gortney, director of the Joint Staff, told reporters at a March 19 Pentagon briefing in Washington.

"We're on the leading edge of ... coalition military operations designed to enforce United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 in Libya," Gortney said.

"The goals of these initial operations are essentially twofold: first, to prevent further attacks by regime forces on Libyan citizens and opposition groups, especially in and around Benghazi; and second, to degrade the regime's capability to resist the no-fly zone we are implementing under that United Nations resolution," he said.

The targets chosen by coalition forces were selected based on an assessment that these sites posed either a direct threat to coalition aircraft enforcing the no-fly zone or a direct threat to the people of Libya, Gortney told reporters.

In addition to the sea-launched cruise missiles that struck more than 20 integrated air defense systems and communications and command facilities, U.S., British and French military planes stopped Qadhafi's armored forces that were attacking the opposition-held city of Benghazi. Military aircraft from other nations are expected to join in the no-fly zone operations as early as March 20, Mullen said.

"These strikes were carefully coordinated with our coalition partners," Gortney said. "I want to stress, however, that this is just the first phase of what will likely be a multiphased military operation designed to enforce the United Nations resolution."

[Clinton Working with Partners on Response to Violence in Libya](#) (03-19-2011)
